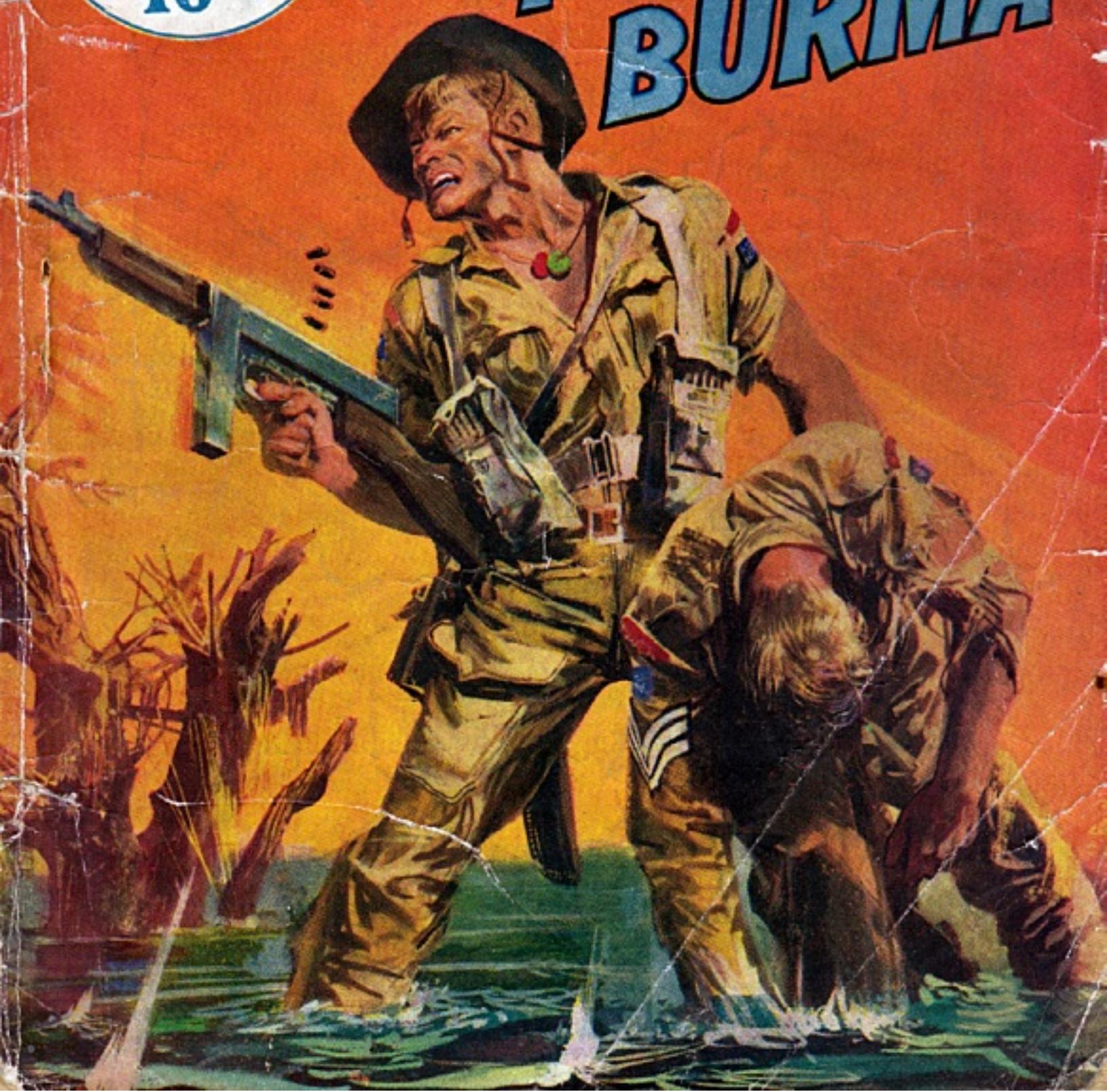


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SPECIAL FORCE BURMA

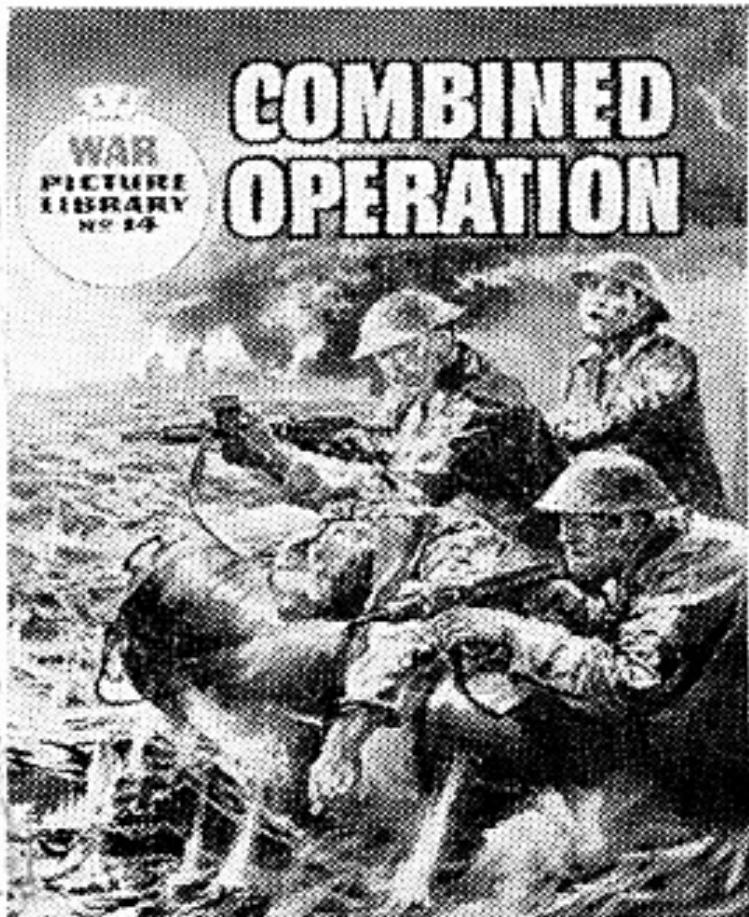


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SPECIAL FORCE BURMA

BY THE JANUARY OF 1944 THE PLIGHT OF THE XIVTH ARMY, FIGHTING VALIANTLY IN BURMA, WAS DESPERATE. AFTER GRUELING MONTHS OF INCESSANT ATTACKS BY JAPANESE FORCES, OUR WEARY SOLDIERS BEGAN FALLING BACK ACROSS THE RIVER CHINDWIN. OUTNUMBERED BY THE SAVAGELY FANATIC Hordes OF THE LITTLE YELLOW MEN OF NIPPON, THE TROOPS GRUDGINGLY GAVE GROUND.



TORN, MAIMED AND DYING FROM A NIGHTMARE JUNGLE CAMPAIGN THEY NEVERTHELESS WITHDREW ACROSS THE RIVER WITH THAT CALM ORDER WHICH HAS ALWAYS MARKED THE BRITISH SOLDIER IN A TIGHT CORNER

Chapter 1. JUNGLE MISSION

THE CROSSING SUCCESSFULLY CARRIED OUT, OUR SOLDIERS, WITH NERVES STRAINED AND PHYSICAL ENDURANCE AT BREAKING POINT, NOW HAD TO ENDURE PERSISTENT "JITTER-ATTACKS" BY JAP PATROLS, STEALING ACROSS THE RIVER UNDER COVER OF THE BLACK JUNGLE NIGHT.

YOOHOO! YOU DIE, JOHNNY!
YOU DIE, TONIGHT!

DON'T CALL BACK OR MOVE,
OR YOU'LL GIVE OUR POSITIONS AWAY!

ONE SUCH JAP ATTACK COLLIDED ONE NIGHT WITH A PARTY OF SPECIALLY-TRAINED JUNGLE FIGHTERS OF THE SPECIAL FORCE, AS THEY WERE CALLED. THE LEADER OF THIS PARTY WAS CAPTAIN ROD RANSOME. HIS TASK THAT NIGHT WAS TO OUT-JAP A JAP PATROL AND BRING IN A PRISONER, AND IT LOOKED AS IF HIS LUCK WAS IN.

YOOHOO,
JOHNNY~~YOU LIKE KUPATEE?

HE'S MY CUPPA TEA, ALL RIGHT,
THE LITTLE YELLOW APE!

BY JEERING AT THE BRITISH, THE JAPS HOPED TO PROVOKE THEM INTO GIVING AWAY THEIR POSITION. BUT RANSOME AND HIS MEN OF THE SPECIAL FORCE WERE AS WILY AS THE CREEPING ENEMY. WHILE THE OTHERS MADE FOR THE TREES, RANSOME SECURED A FLASHLIGHT TO A HIDDEN TRIP WIRE.



RANSOME PULLED HIMSELF INTO A TREE, LEAVING THE FLASHLIGHT SWINGING LIKE A PENDULUM. THE JAPS' CURIOSITY WOULD DO THE REST.

THE JAPS WILL THINK IT'S SOMEONE LOOKING FOR THEM WITH A LIGHT!



THEY HAD TO WAIT SO LONG THAT RANSOME THOUGHT THE JAPS HAD GONE HOME. BUT SUDDENLY SHADOWY FIGURES APPEARED FROM NOWHERE. THEIR LEADER GRASPED THE TORCH AND



...A BLINDING MAGNESIUM FLARE, SET OFF BY TRIP WIRE, BETRAYED THE SKULKING JAPS TO THE BRITISH STEN GUNS WHICH RIDLED THEM IN ONE CONCERTED ROAR OF FLAME AND LEAD.

SORRY, LITTLE MAN, BUT WE WANT TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS!



GRIMLY SATISFIED WITH THEIR NIGHT'S WORK, THE BRITISH PARTY RETURNED TO THEIR FIELD H.Q. WHERE RANSOME PUSHED HIS CAPTIVE BEFORE COLONEL PINDER, COMMANDING THE SPECIAL FORCE.

HERE YOU ARE, COLONEL -- ONE SPECIMEN PRISONER, AND I THINK HE'LL TALK.



COLONEL PINDER PUT HIS QUESTIONS SO ARTFULLY THAT THE JAP ACTUALLY BECAME BOASTFUL, WHICH WAS PRECISELY WHAT THE COLONEL WANTED.

HE'S VERY ANNOYED AT THE WAY YOU POOH-POOH THE IMPERIAL JAP ARMY. HE SAYS THEY'RE BUILDING UP ALL ALONG THE RIVER BANK FOR A GRAND OFFENSIVE. AND IF WE DON'T BELIEVE HIM, WE CAN SEE ALL THE RAFTS BEING CONCENTRATED UP-RIVER.



Special Force Burma

IF IT'S TRUE WHAT THE PRISONER SAYS ABOUT THOSE RAFTS IT LOOKS AS IF THE JAPS REALLY MEAN BUSINESS. GET YOURSELF A PLANE AND RECCE THE RIVER, ESPECIALLY FARTHER NORTH. THIS IS SERIOUS.

VERY GOOD, SIR.
MY GUESS IS THAT
I'LL FIND THE RAFTS
NEAR HOMALIN, FIFTY
MILES UP-RIVER, WELL
OUT OF SIGHT.

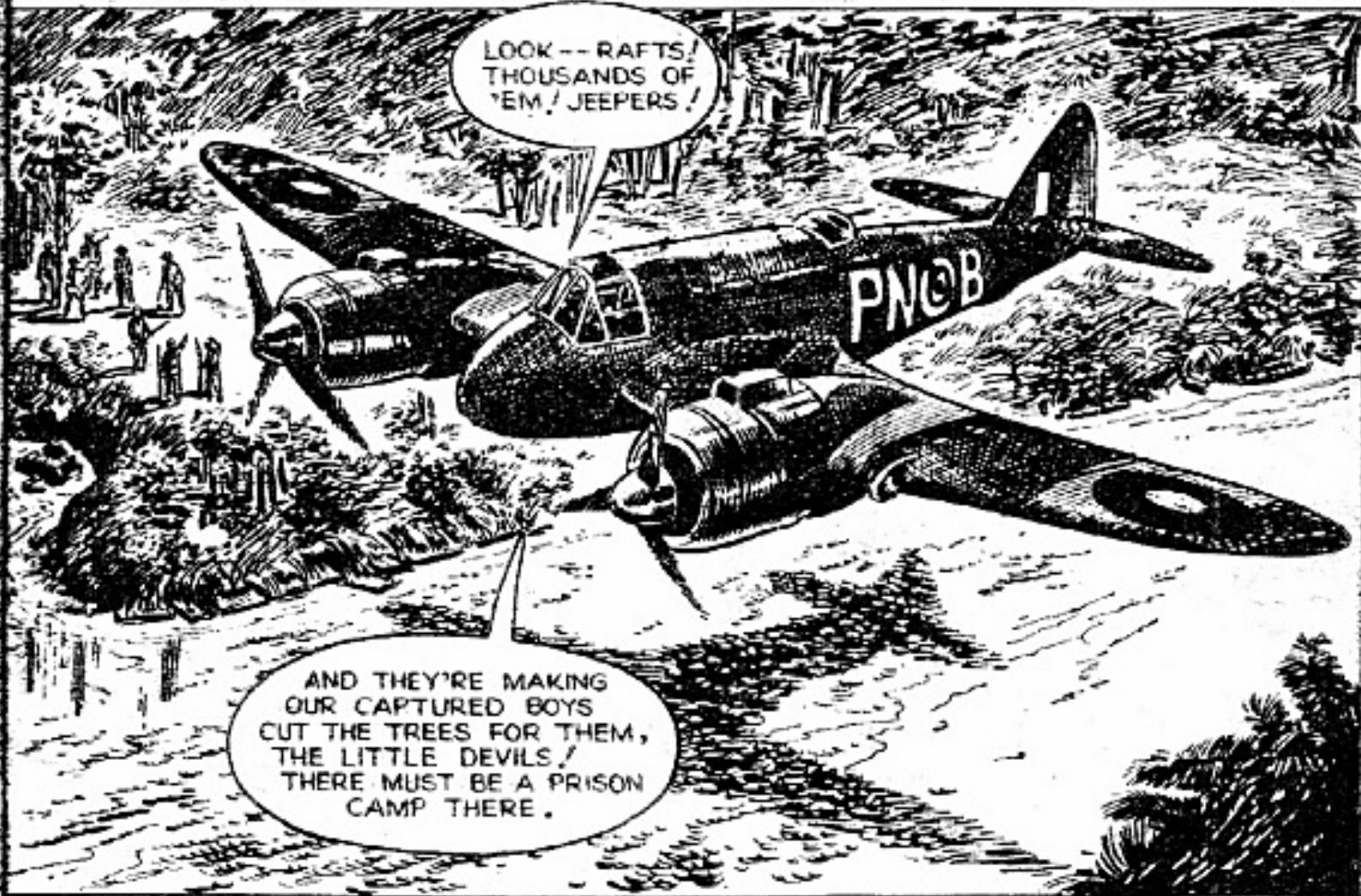
FIRST THING NEXT MORNING, ROD RANSOME WENT TO THE AIRFIELD AT IMPHAL AND ARRANGED WITH AN R.A.F. FRIEND TO TAKE HIM ON A RECCE FLIGHT UP THE CHINOWIN RIVER. FOR THE FIRST MILES OF FLYING, NOTHING OF THE ENEMY COULD BE SEEN -- ONLY THE DENSE CARPET OF JUNGLE ON EITHER SIDE.

I DON'T SEE ANY RAFTS, ROD.

LET'S HAVE A DEKKO UP THERE WHERE THE RIVER FORKS, JIM

PNOB

SKIMMING LOW WHERE THE RIVER FORKED NEAR HOMALIN, ROD WAS REWARDED BY THE SIGHT OF A MASS OF RAFTS CLEVERLY CAMOUFLAGED UNDER THE BUSHES. SO IT WAS TRUE -- THE JAPANESE CROSSING WAS IMMINENT, AND THERE WAS NO TIME TO LOSE!



SPEEDING BACK TO THE AIRFIELD, RANSOME FOUND COLONEL PINDER WAITING FOR HIS INFORMATION.



SWIFTLY RANSOME SELECTED FOUR MEN OF THE SPECIAL FORCE AND ONE MAN OF THE BURMESE RIFLES, CORPORAL CHANGI. WHILE THEY LISTENED TO THEIR BRIEFING, THEY PACKED THEIR SPECIAL JUNGLE KIT AND RATIONS, AND EXPERTLY CHECKED THEIR WEAPONS -- STEN GUNS, GRENADES, AMMUNITION AND JUNGLE KNIVES.



WAITING FOR THE COVER OF NIGHT, RANSOME'S PARTY PREPARED TO LEAVE ON THEIR DARING MISSION. COLONEL PINDER HAD A FEW LAST WORDS TO SAY ...



Special Force Burma

9

ROD RANSOME MADE ONE LAST QUICK CHECK-OVER AND THEN THEY STARTED, STEERING NEAR TO THEIR OWN BANK WHERE THE CURRENT WAS NOT SO STRONG. WITH PADDLES MUFFLED WITH CLOTH, THEY SLIPPED THROUGH THE WATER IN A WRAITHLIKE SILENCE.



HALF AN HOUR OF PADDLING AND THEY HAD A SHOCK AS A JAPANESE RIVER PATROL BOAT LOOMED OUT OF THE GLOOM. RANSOME HAD TO MAKE UP HIS MIND QUICKLY.



Special Force Burma

MORE BY EXAMPLE THAN SPOKEN COMMAND, RANSOME MADE THEM PADDLE FOR THEIR LIVES, EXPECTING ANY SECOND TO HAVE A STREAM OF BULLETS RIPPING THEM APART. BUT THE FRIENDLY MIST SWALLOWED THEM, LEAVING THE JAP BOAT TO PASS ASTERN WITHOUT ANY SIGN OF ALARM.



WITH EVERY SENSE ALERT THEY PADDLED ON THROUGH THE NIGHT AND WITH THE COMING OF DAYLIGHT HID UP ON THE BANK, NOT DARING TO SHOW THEMSELVES TO HIDDEN ENEMY EYES ON THE FAR SIDE.

OKAY, JACKSON, YOU GO ON WITH CORPORAL FLINT, AND TELL BARNES NOT TO MAKE CAMP TOO FAR FROM THE BOAT. I'LL HELP CORPORAL CHANGI HERE WITH THE BOAT. SEE YOU LATER.

IF I'VE GOT TO LUG THIS DARN BOX OF EXPLOSIVES EVERY TIME WE MAKE CAMP, STOKES, I'M GOING TO ENJOY MYSELF!

NEVER HAPPY UNLESS YOU'RE BINDING ABOUT SOMETHING, EH, BARNES?

CARRYING THE COOKING UTENSILS, THE SCOTTISH CORPORAL FLINT CARELESSLY STEPPED IN A CLEAR PATCH WHERE THE SUN, GLINTING ON A PAN, CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF A JAP GUN BATTERY. AT ONCE THE ENEMY OPENED FIRE.

SCATTERED!
THEY'VE SPOTTED
US!



RANSOME AND CORPORAL CHANGI WERE BARELY UP THE BANK WHEN A SECOND SALVO FROM THE ENEMY BATTERY CRASHED ABOUT THE BOAT.

THAT'S DONE THE BOAT A BIT OF NO GOOD, CHANGI.

YOU SPEAK TRUTHFULLY, SAHIB. AND MUCH EQUIPMENT, TOO.



WHEN THE FIRING CEASED, ROD RANSOME CALLED HIS MEN TO THE BOAT WHICH THEY FOUND DAMAGED BEYOND REPAIR. STORES AND AMMUNITION WERE MISSING, TOO.

THE BOAT'S A COMPLETE WRITE-OFF. GET THE EQUIPMENT UP THE BANK AND DRY IT -- AND MIND YOU'RE NOT SEEN.

AIN'T YOU GLAD YOU TOOK THE EXPLOSIVES, BARNES?

MAYBE I AM, MISTER STOKES.



ROD DECIDED THERE WAS NOTHING FOR IT BUT TO MAKE A RAFT, AND THIS COST THEM MANY PRECIOUS HOURS. BUT TWO NIGHTS LATER, THEY WERE ABLE TO MAKE A FRESH START. THE THING THAT WORRIED THE CAPTAIN NOW WAS THE LOSS OF RATIONS AND KIT THROUGH THE SHELLING. NEITHER WAS HE HAPPY ABOUT THEIR RAFT WHICH SLEWED ERRATICALLY IN THE CURRENT.

THE RAFT, SAHIB -- SHE WILL NOT ANSWER TO MY STEERING!

OKAY, CHANGI TRY TO KEEP TOGETHER MORE, LADS!



BUT DESPITE THEIR STRIVING,
THE RAFT WAS NO MATCH
FOR THE CURRENT WHICH
SWUNG THEM EVER NEARER
TO THE ENEMY SHORE.

THIS RAFT IS
USELESS. WE'LL
HAVE TO JUMP ON
TO THE ENEMY BANK.

WITH STRAINING NERVES, YET THANKFUL
ONCE AGAIN FOR THE FRIENDLY MIST,
THEY BUMPED INTO THE BANK AND CREEPT
ASHORE WITHOUT BEING SEEN. PAUSING
ONLY TO ADJUST THEIR LOADS, THEY
FOLLOWED CAPTAIN RANSOME INTO THE
PROTECTIVE GLOOM OF THE JUNGLE.



ROD KNEW IT WAS FOOLISH TO ATTEMPT THE JUNGLE BY NIGHT, SO PRESENTLY HE CALLED A HALT WHEN HE CONSIDERED THEY WERE COMPARATIVELY SAFE. HE SAT AND FACED A WORRIED CIRCLE OF MEN TRYING NOT TO SHOW THE ANXIETY THAT GNAWED AT HIS OWN MIND. TELLING THEM TO EAT SPARINGLY, HE REVIEWED THEIR POSITION QUITE FRANKLY.

WELL, I WON'T WRAP IT UP, LADS -- WE'VE GOT ABOUT TWO DAYS' RATIONS LEFT AND A THIRTY MILE TREK THROUGH THE JUNGLE TO OUR OBJECTIVE.



WITH EARS COCKED FOR THE SLIGHTEST SUSPICIOUS SOUND, THE DAUNTLESS MEN OF THE SPECIAL FORCE FORGED DOGGEDLY NORTHWARD, UP AGAINST NOT ONLY AN UNSEEN FEROCIOUS ENEMY BUT THE JUNGLE ITSELF WITH ITS FEVER SWAMPS, ITS TEARING, GRASPING UNDERGROWTH, ITS EXCESSIVE, STAGNANT HEAT.

WITH THE LAST OF THEIR RATIONS LONG SINCE GONE AND FAINT WITH THIRST AND HEAT, RANSOME AND HIS MEN WERE IN A PRETTY BAD STATE WHEN TWO DAYS LATER THEY CAME UPON A CLUSTER OF HUTS.



THE NATIVES APPEARED FRIENDLY AND RANSOME WAS ABLE TO REST HIS MEN IN A HUT, CONFIDENT THAT CORPORAL CHANGI WOULD ENLIST THE HELP OF THE HEADMAN OF THE VILLAGE. RANSOME WAS SURE THAT, GIVEN TIME TO RECOVER AND TO GET PROPERLY PROVISIONED, HIS GALLANT PARTY COULD PUSH ON WITH RENEWED SPIRITS AND REACH THEIR TARGET ~ THE RAFTS AT HOMALIN.



SETTLING DOWN FOR THE NIGHT, THE PARTY WAS STARTLED TO HEAR A RUSTLING BY THE DOOR...



WHEN HE CRAWLED NEARER, THEY SAW THAT IT WAS A YOUNG ENGLISH LAD OF ABOUT SIXTEEN. WHISPERING AS THOUGH FEARING EAVESDROPPERS, HE TOLD THEM HE WAS JERRY STANTON AND THAT HE HAD ESCAPED UP-COUNTRY FROM THE JAPS. BUT NOW HE HAD COME TO WARN THEM

SIR, YOU MUSTN'T TRUST THE HEADMAN. HE WILL SELL YOU TO THE JAPS. THEY HAVE OFFERED SIXTY DOLLARS FOR EVERY BRITISH SOLDIER CAUGHT ALIVE.



YOU WILL BE SAFE TILL MORNING. YOU MUST LEAVE AT DAWN. PLEASE LET ME COME WITH YOU. I WOULD BE A GOOD SCOUT FOR YOUR MEN.

YOU CAN HARDLY REFUSE THE YOUNGSTER, SIR, CAN YOU ?



WHILE THEY WAITED FOR DAYLIGHT, JERRY TOLD THEM HOW HIS PARENTS HAD ESCAPED FROM RANGOON IN THE LAST BOAT. HE HAD BECOME SEPARATED IN THE PANIC AND WAS LEFT BEHIND. LUCKILY MANY OF THE VILLAGE HEADMEN HAD KNOWN HIS FATHER AND SO HE FOUND SHELTER. BUT WITH SO MANY JAPS AROUND IT WAS GETTING DANGEROUS.



I AM NOT
SO SURE THAT
I AM SAFE WITH
THIS HEADMAN,
AND CERTAINLY
NONE OF YOU
ARE!

THANKS FOR THE TIP,
JERRY. OF COURSE YOU'LL
HAVE TO JOIN US. THIS MEANS
WE'LL HAVE TO SLIP AWAY
WITHOUT A CHANCE TO GET
PROPER FOOD FOR THE
TREK. PITY!



AT DAYLIGHT JERRY LED THEM SAFELY OUT OF THE VILLAGE, BUT NOT BEFORE THEY HAD SPOTTED THE HEADMAN TALKING TO AN EVIL-LOOKING NATIVE .

SEE -- THE HEADMAN IS REPORTING YOU TO THE JAP AGENT !

YOU WERE RIGHT, JERRY. THE MORE MILES WE CAN PUT BETWEEN US AND THIS PLACE, THE BETTER FOR US. WE MUST KEEP GOING NORTHWARDS !

THAT'S WHAT I CALL REAL HOSPITALITY !

SO ONCE MORE ROD RANSOME AND HIS PARTY PLUNGED INTO THE STIFLING JUNGLE, ALWAYS WORKING TOWARDS THEIR ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE. OBLIGED TO ESCAPE THE VILLAGE WITHOUT EXTRA FOOD OR DRINKING WATER, THEY HAD TO RATION THEMSELVES ON THE LITTLE THEY HAD. KEEPING CLOSE TO THE RIVER THEY MADE GOOD PROGRESS UNTIL THEY FOUND THEIR PATH BLOCKED BY AN ENEMY CAMP.

WE'LL WAIT TILL DARK THEN I'LL DISTRACT THEIR ATTENTION WHILE THE REST OF YOU NIP PAST BY THE RIVER .

Special Force Burma

19

WHEN DARKNESS FELL, RANSOME CRAWLED TOWARDS THE JAP CAMP AND HAD THE GOOD LUCK TO STRIKE A DUMP OF AMMUNITION BOXES. DOWN BY THE RIVER HIS MEN WAITED TENSELY FOR THE SIGNAL TO MAKE A DASH FOR IT.

JUST A LITTLE GUN-COTTON BETWEEN THESE AMMO BOXES AND A NICE LONG FUSE TO GIVE ME TIME TO JOIN THE LADS.



IGNITING THE FUSE, RANSOME HAD JUST TIME TO REJOIN THE OTHERS WHEN THE NIGHT WAS SPLIT BY A SHATTERING ROAR FOLLOWED BY THE SHARP CRACKS OF EXPLODING BULLETS. THE JAPS SPRANG TO THEIR FEET WITH YELPS OF FRIGHT. THIS WAS THE MOMENT!



Special Force Burma

SPRINTING LIKE MAD THEY GAINED THE SHELTER OF THE FAR SIDE ONLY TO FIND THAT JERRY WAS MISSING.



THEN CORPORAL BARNES SAW JERRY SCUTTLING AFTER THEM WITH A BUNDLE UNDER HIS ARM.



JERRY PANTED UP TO THE RELIEVED MEN AND DISPLAYED HIS BOOTY WITH PRIDE.



Chapter 2. AMBUSHED !

MUCH HEARTENED BY THIS SUCCESS AND ESPECIALLY BY JERRY'S BOOTY, THE SPECIAL FORCE HID UNTIL DAYLIGHT AND THEN PRESSSED ON. ONLY THE PESSIMISTIC BARNES STRUCK A GLOOMY NOTE.



BY THE AFTERNOON OF THE NEXT DAY, THEY WERE FLOUNDERING THROUGH EVIL-SMELLING SWAMPS. JERRY PLODDED MANFULLY ON, REFUSING TO ADMIT DEFEAT.

MIND HOW YOU GO, JERRY!

I'M ALL RIGHT, SIR .



GAINING HIGHER GROUND AT LAST, RANSOME CALLED A HALT. CAKED WITH FILTH AND TORMENTED BY INSECTS, THE MEN FLUNG THEMSELVES TO THE GROUND. THE SWAMP HAD TAKEN TERRIBLE TOLL OF THEIR MINDS AND THEIR STRENGTH.

I'M NOT BUDGING ANOTHER INCH -- I'M FINISHED!



SUDDENLY, JERRY UTTERED A CRY OF DISMAY AS A JAP PATROL BURST INTO THE CLEARING. THE JAPANESE OFFICER'S PISTOL CRACKED AND STOKES CRUMPLED FORWARD, SHOT THROUGH THE HEAD. IN A FLASH, RANSOME AND HIS MEN SPRANG TO LIFE ...

LOOK OUT!
JAPS!



THE JAPS CAME RUSHING ON TO MEET A WITHERING FIRE FROM THE MEN WHO HAD REACHED COVER. BUT JACKSON, CAUGHT IN THE OPEN, MET A HAIL OF ENEMY BULLETS !

THEY'VE GOT, JACKSON, SIR !



ANOTHER VOLLEY FROM THE STEN GUNS SILENCED THE JAPANESE PATROL FOR EVER !

AAAGH!



SADLY BURYING THE BODIES OF STOKES AND JACKSON, THE LITTLE PARTY LEFT THE SCENE AS QUICKLY AS THEY COULD. AFTER A SAFE DISTANCE, THEY HALTED AND MADE ROUGH CAMP FOR THE NIGHT. ALL WERE DEPRESSED AT THE LOSS OF TWO GALLANT COMPANIONS.

THE RIVER SHOULD BE JUST OVER THAT RIDGE. WE'LL REST AND EAT, AND WITH A BIT OF LUCK WE'LL MAKE IT TOMORROW!



THAT NIGHT, EVEN ROD RANSOME FELL PREY TO DESPAIR. ALL ALONG HE HAD SHOWN A BRAVE FACE TO HIS MEN BUT NOW THE SITUATION REALLY DAUNTED HIM. ADDED TO THE SHOCK OF LOSING JACKSON AND STOKES CAME THE GNAWING DOUBT AS TO WHETHER THEY WOULD SURVIVE, LET ALONE REACH THEIR GOAL -- THE RAFTS AT HOMALIN.



AT DAYLIGHT, RANSOME BRACED HIMSELF TO ENCOURAGE HIS FOOTSORE BAND ACROSS THE SWELTERING VALLEY. BY THE AFTERNOON HE WAS REWARDED BY A GLAD CRY FROM JERRY, SCOUTING AHEAD. THE BOY'S WORDS PUT FRESH HEART INTO THEM ALL.



FEELING THAT ANYTHING WAS BETTER THAN THE DEADLY JUNGLE, THEY QUICKENED PACE DOWN TO THE RIVER'S EDGE WHERE THEY FOUND JUST WHAT THEY NEEDED ~~ A BOAT!



CHANGI CREEP SOUNDLESSLY CLOSE TO THE DOZING SENTRY AND SPRANG AT HIM WITH A ROUGH CLUDGE. INSTANTLY RANSOME DARTED FORWARD



AS THE BOAT MOVED AWAY FROM THE BANK, RANSOME JERKED THE ENGINE INTO LIFE. THEY CHUGGED OUT INTO THE RIVER ~~ BUT NOT BEFORE THE JAPS HEARD THE ENGINE AND CAME RUNNING.



Special Force Burma

FOR SOME TIME RANSOME HUGGED THE BANK, KEEPING A SHARP LOOK-OUT. MEANWHILE, THE MEN'S SPIRITS HAD BRIGHTENED, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY FOUND FOOD AND WATER ABOARD. MUCH REFRESHED, THEY COULD EVEN CONSIDER THEIR OBJECTIVE MORE PURPOSEFULLY.

MUSTN'T PUSH OUR LUCK TOO FAR-- BETTER HIDE UP TILL DARK.

I BET THE RIVER'S CHOCK-FULL OF MURDERING JAPS OUT LOOKING FOR US!

PATIENTLY THEY WAITED TILL DARK AND THEN VENTURED UP-RIVER ONCE MORE, READY FOR ANYTHING. THEY DID NOT HAVE LONG TO WAIT.

LOOK . . . BARGES! IT'S A PONTOON BRIDGE!

THE BEGINNINGS OF ONE. THAT MEANS THEY HAVEN'T STARTED THE INVASION YET. WE STILL HAVE TIME TO DEAL WITH THE RAFTS!

THROTTLING BACK, RANSOME DECIDED TO WRECK THIS ENEMY ATTEMPT TO BRIDGE THE RIVER. HE REMEMBERED THE TUNIC AND CAP WHICH CHANGI HAD STRIPPED OFF THE UNCONSCIOUS JAPANESE SENTRY AND AN IDEA SPRANG INTO HIS MIND. TRUE, THEY HAD LOST THEIR EXPLOSIVES IN THE JUNGLE BUT THEY STILL HAD HAND GRENADES AND RANSOME INTENDED TO USE THEM TO THE BEST EFFECT.

IN THAT UNIFORM THEY WILL THINK CHANGI IS A JAP. THAT WILL ALLOW HIM TO GET THE BOAT CLOSE ENOUGH WITHOUT ROUSING SUSPICION. THEN EVERY MAN KNOWS WHAT TO DO!

AYE --
WE DO
THAT, SIR!



JERRY'S HEART BEAT FAST AS CHANGI BROUGHT THE BOAT QUIETLY NEARER AND THEN OPENED UP FULL-THROTTLE. THE BOAT LEAPT FORWARD AND EVERY MAN CROUCHED READY TO TOSS A GRENADE INTO HIS ALLOTTED BARGE. JERRY HAD BEGGED TO BE ALLOWED TO ACCOUNT FOR ONE BARGE AND HIS HAND PRICKLED AT THE FEEL OF THE DEADLY LITTLE BOMB.

STAND
BY!

A
MACHINE-
GUN!



AS CHANGI SHOT THE BOAT PAST THE LINE OF BARGES, EACH MAN BIT THE PIN FROM A GRENADE AND FLUNG IT IN. WHEN THE HORRIFIED JAPS SAW THE FIRST AND SECOND BARGES SPLITTING APART WITH A DEAFENING EXPLOSION, THEY SCREAMED IN ALARM AND LET FLY WITH ALL GUNS.



BUT THE LAST BURST FROM THE MACHINE GUNNERS FOUND A MARK AND CHANGI STAGGERED BACKWARDS. RANSOME LEAPT TO THE WHEEL, WHILE FLINT CAUGHT THE FALLING BURMESE.



THE WOUNDED CHANGI STOICALLY SUFFERED A NIGHT OF PAIN WITH A BULLET LODGED IN HIS BACK. IN THE MORNING, RANSOME KNEW HE WOULD HAVE TO RISK GETTING HIM PROPER ATTENTION -- POSSIBLY FROM THE NATIVES. A SMALL GROUP OF FISHERMEN'S HUTS CAUGHT HIS ATTENTION...



WHEN THE NERVOUS NATIVES EMERGED FROM CONCEALMENT, THEY LISTENED TO RANSOME'S STORY AND PROMISED TO TAKE CARE OF THEIR COUNTRYMAN AND HIDE HIM FROM THE JAPANESE. BUT THEY WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE BRITISH, WHOSE PRESENCE MIGHT COST THEM THEIR LIVES.



SAYING GOOD-BYE TO THE NATIVES THE PARTY, NOW GRIEVOUSLY REDUCED, SET OFF ONCE MORE, SAD AT THE LOSS OF THE DEVOTED CHANGI. THEY WERE ON THE LAST STAGE OF THEIR EFFORT.



Chapter 3. IN ENEMY HANDS

BUT FATE NOW DEALT A CRUEL, PARALYSING BLOW WHICH TOOK THEM COMPLETELY OFF GUARD!

HALT!
SURRENDER!

BY THUNDER--
THE JAPS!
RUN FOR IT!

MAKING A LIGHTNING DECISION, RANSOME RESISTED THE IMPULSE TO RUN, AND TO HIS MEN'S HORRIFIED INCREDOULITY, CHOSE RATHER TO SURRENDER.

BUT IF WE SURRENDER THEY'LL KILL US!

OCH, MON—
YE CANNA MEAN
TO GIVE IN NOW!

BETTER THAT THAN
TO THROW AWAY OUR
LIVES TRYING TO ESCAPE.
WHILE WE LIVE THERE'S
STILL HOPE OF GETTING
TO HOMALIN -- EVEN IF
IT IS AS PRISONERS.

IN TEN MINUTES THE SWIFT CHANGE OF FORTUNE WAS COMPLETE AND RANSOME AND HIS DISGUSTED COMPANIONS FOUND THEMSELVES THROWN AMONGST OTHER PRISONERS - OF - WAR IN THE STEAMER'S HOLD.

BARNES IS TELLING EVERYBODY YOU QUIT-- AND IT'S NOT TRUE!



RANSOME WAS TAKEN ON TO THE DECK AN HOUR LATER AND PUSHED BEFORE GENERAL TOTO, THE JAPANESE COMMANDER. WHEN HE REFUSED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS, HE MET THE LITTLE TYRANT'S FURY WITH CALM DIGNITY

JAPANESE EMPEROR NUMBER ONE -- BRITISH EMPIRE NUMBER TEN. UNDERSTAND?



RANSOME WAS LED AWAY FROM THE FURIOUS COMMANDER...THEN HIS EYES MET A SIGHT WHICH MADE HIS PULSE QUICKEN.

BY CRACKY--
RAFTS! THIS
MUST BE HOMALIN!



AS THE PRISONERS FILED DOWN THE GANGWAY, RANSOME SPOKE ANGRILY IN DEFENCE OF JERRY WHO WAS BEING PUSHED ABOUT BY ONE OF THE GUARDS.

TELL YOUR BRUTES TO LAY OFF THE KID -- HE'S A CIVILIAN!

HIM SOLDIER.
ALL SAME
SOLDIER. COME
ON -- SPEEDO!



THAT NIGHT IT WAS A VERY THOUGHTFUL RANSOME WHO GAZED THROUGH THE BARBED WIRE OF THE HOMALIN PRISONER COMPOUND. NOT EVEN THE RESENTFUL BARNES COULD DISTURB THE HOPE THAT NOW ROSE WITHIN HIM.

I SUPPOSE YOU KNOW THE NIPS MAKE YOU SLOG AT THOSE FLIPPING RAFTS TILL YOU DIE. I HOPE YOU'RE SATISFIED!

WE'VE GOT HERE QUICKER BY SURRENDERING THAN BY ANY OTHER MEANS.

BUT, MON -- YE CANNA HOPE TO DESTROY THE RAFTS -- A PRISONER!



ROD RANSOME AND HIS THREE COMPANIONS
WERE MARCHED OUT WITH THE OTHER
PRISONERS FOR RAFT BUILDING WORK.

SPEEDO!
SPEEDO!



SET TO CUT DOWN TREES UNDER
THE BALEFUL EYE OF THEIR GUARD,
RANSOME AND JERRY COULD ONLY
CONVERSE IN LOW TONES.

THERE ARE
THE RAFTS,
JERRY! HOW
DO WE SMASH
THEM?

IT'S NOT GOING
TO BE EASY WITH
ALL THESE SOLDIERS
AROUND



AS THE DAYS WENT BY THE CHANCES OF ACTION SEEMED MORE REMOTE. RANSOME FOUND HIMSELF SHUNNED BY HIS FELLOW PRISONERS, FOR BARNES HAD SPREAD THE STORY OF HIS CAPTAIN'S "FAINT HEARTEDNESS".

I DON'T SEEM VERY POPULAR AROUND HERE BUT UNTIL THE TIME COMES I'LL HAVE TO STICK IT OUT.



DEJECTEDLY RANSOME THOUGHT OF THE MANY LITTLE RUSES HE HAD USED IN ATTEMPTS TO GET AT THE RAFTS. BUT EACH TIME HE HAD BEEN FOILED AND THE GUARDS NOW VIEWED HIM WITH EXTRA SUSPICION.



THE YOUNG CAPTAIN'S DESPAIR WAS COMPLETE THE DAY HE SAW THE JAPANESE DIVISION RISE UP IN THEIR THOUSANDS AND POUR ACROSS THE RIVER ON THE RAFTS HE SHOULD HAVE DESTROYED. THE JAPANESE GRAND OFFENSIVE HAD BEGUN AND HE HAD FAILED TO PREVENT IT.



SOME DAYS LATER, THE PRISONERS WERE GIVEN A FRESH JOB ~~ THAT OF FERRYING THE JAP WOUNDED BACK FROM THE OTHER SIDE IN THIS WAY RANSOME AND JERRY GOT A GOOD IDEA OF WHAT WAS GOING ON. SO FAR THE JAPS WERE HAVING IT NEARLY ALL THEIR OWN WAY.

GET A GOOD
LOOK, JERRY, IT
MIGHT COME IN
USEFUL .

NO
TALK !



SOMETIMES THERE WERE WOUNDED BRITISH PRISONERS, AND THEIR NEWS WAS BAD .

THE JAPS HAVE SURROUNDED IMPHAL. WE'RE TRYING TO HOLD OUT...REINFORCEMENTS...



BUT AS THE DAYS MERGED INTO WEEKS RANSOME AND JERRY NOTICED THAT THE JAPS WERE SUFFERING INCREASING CASUALTIES -- MANY LOOKED STARVED AND EXHAUSTED.

THIS LOT
LOOK IN A
PRETTY BAD
SHAPE!



THAT NIGHT IN THE PRISON CAMP, RANSOME FELT THE TIME HAD COME TO TELL THE OTHERS WHAT WAS IN HIS MIND. BUT IF HE HOPED FOR VOLUNTEERS HE WAS DISAPPOINTED. ALL, SAVE JERRY, LAUGHED AT HIS IDEAS.

IT'S MY BELIEF THE BRITISH ARE DRIVING THE JAPS BACK INTO THE RIVER. IN THAT CASE THE JAPS WOULD WANT ALL THOSE RAFTS AGAIN, BUT NOT IF I CAN HELP IT. WHO'LL HELP ME SMASH THEM?



EVEN BARNES AND FLINT COULD NOT BE CONVINCED..

BUT DON'T YOU SEE -- WITHOUT THE RAFTS THE JAPS WILL BE CUT OFF AND CORNERED!

SORRY, BUT I THINK THERE'S NOTHING TO STOP THE JAPS BASHING ON TO INDIA.

OCH, YOURS IS A WILD DREAM.

TURNING TO HIS ONLY STAUNCH ALLY, THE LAD JERRY, ROD RANSOME CONFIDED HIS ALL-CONSUMING AMBITION.

JERRY -- THAT JUST LEAVES YOU AND ME, I GUESS. WE'LL SMASH THOSE RAFTS IF IT'S THE LAST THING WE DO!

WE'LL SMASH 'EM, ALL RIGHT!

Chapter 4. ESCAPE TO ACTION

SOON THE JAPANESE WOUNDED WERE COMING BACK IN A STEADY STREAM. CLEARLY SOMETHING WAS GOING WRONG WITH THEIR OFFENSIVE. RANSOME, JERRY AND THE OTHERS WERE DRIVEN TO EXHAUSTION-POINT FERRYING THEM FROM THE FAR SIDE, WHILE THEIR GUARDS GAVE THEM NO REST.



FINALLY WITH MORE JAP TROOPS APPEARING ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE RIVER, RANSOME CONFIDED TO JERRY THAT THE TIME HAD COME FOR ACTION. THE SOUNDS OF BATTLE WERE DAILY COMING NEARER, SIGNIFYING A GENERAL BRITISH ADVANCE.



THE NEXT NIGHT RANSOME AND JERRY GOT READY FOR THEIR ATTEMPT TO DESTROY THE RAFTS. THE OTHERS WATCHED THE DAUNTLESS PAIR SLIP AWAY WITH MORE HOPE THAN FAITH.

WAIT FOR SOME SORT OF SIGNAL TO STAGE A MASS BREAKOUT FROM THE PRISON.



THE PAIR BEGAN THEIR DESPERATE BID TO REACH THE RIVER'S EDGE .



I'LL SETTLE THIS MONKEY--
YOU GET A RAFT READY.



RANSOME LEAPT SILENTLY UPON THE GUARD AND THROTTLED THE MAN'S SURPRISED CRY WHILE JERRY CAST LOOSE ONE OF THE SMALLER RAFTS.



WITHOUT A WORD, RANSOME SPRANG ON TO THE RAFT AND THE PAIR QUIETLY MOVED OFF TOWARDS THE FAR BANK. THE PROTECTING MIST SEEMED A LUCKY OMEN.



NAVIGATING BY INSTINCT, THEY PUSHED ON
THROUGH THE MIST. SHIVERING WITH
EXCITEMENT, JERRY WHISPERED THE
QUESTION THAT HAD BEEN OCCUPYING
RANSOME'S OWN MIND.

HOW ARE
YOU GOING TO
TACKLE ALL
THOSE RAFTS?

CUT THEM
LOOSE, I RECKON,
UNLESS I THINK
OF SOMETHING
BETTER.

WHEN THEY WERE ALMOST
ACROSS THEY GOT A SHOCK.

LOOK --
A JAP
RAFT!

TOO LATE TO
DODGE. ACTION
STATIONS, JERRY!

AS THE RAFTS COLLIDED, ONE OF THE STARTLED JAP SOLDIERS FELL HEADLONG INTO THE RIVER... AND JERRY AND RANSOME LEAPT ABOARD THE ENEMY CRAFT ...



THE OTHER SOLDIER FELL TO HIS KNEES BEGGING FOR MERCY.

SPEAK -- YOU LITTLE NIP !
WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE BIG BATTLE ?

BRITISH
VERY STRONG.
ALL JAPS RUN !



SUDDENLY THE JAP BROKE AWAY AND WHIPPED OUT HIS BAYONET, DEALING RANSOME A NASTY CUT ON THE HEAD. THEN, TRYING TO AVOID JERRY'S FLAILING FISTS, HE FELL BACKWARDS INTO THE WATER.



JERRY BOUND UP RANSOME'S HEAD AS WELL AS HE COULD AND THEN INVESTIGATED THE STORES ON THE RAFT.

'LOOK --
CANS OF
PETROL!'

JERRY,
THAT GIVES
ME AN
IDEA!

ALTHOUGH GIDDY WITH PAIN, RANSOME INSISTED ON TAKING A POLE . . .

SURE YOU
CAN MANAGE,
MISTER
RANSOME?

GOT TO KEEP
POLING, JERRY,
OR THE CURRENT
WILL CARRY US
AWAY FROM
THOSE RAFTS.



AFTER A LONG STRUGGLE THEY REACHED THE OTHER SIDE AND, AS THE MIST LIFTED, THEY SAW THE FATEFUL RAFTS SPREAD OUT LIKE A GIANT FLOATING PLATFORM. RANSOME TRIED TO COLLECT HIS REELING SENSES AND WORK OUT THE BEST METHOD FOR HIS SCHEME. FROM THE BANK CAME PANIC SOUNDS OF THE ENEMY IN FLIGHT.



THE STRUGGLE UPSTREAM AGAINST THE CURRENT ALMOST FINISHED RANSOME, BUT HE WORKED ON WITH DESPERATE STRENGTH. FOR HIS IDEA TO BE SUCCESSFUL THEY HAD TO ANCHOR UP ABOVE THE RAFTS.



WITH THEIR STRENGTH DRAINING FROM THEM, THEY AT LAST REACHED THEIR POSITION. JERRY MADE FAST WHILE RANSOME SAT DOWN WEAKLY TO SURVEY THE COUNTLESS RAFTS NOW DOWN-STREAM OF THEM.



WHILE RANSOME PAINFULLY JERKED OUT HIS WORDS,
JERRY PUT THE DARING SCHEME INTO ACTION.



OVER AT BRITISH HEADQUARTERS,
THE COMMANDING OFFICER'S MAIN
CONCERN WAS THE OVERTAKING OF
THE FLEEING ENEMIES.

IF ONLY WE COULD CATCH
TOTO AND HIS LITTLE SO-
AND-SO'S BEFORE THEY HAVE
A CHANCE TO NIP BACK
OVER THE RIVER ...



MEANWHILE GENERAL TOTO AND HIS STAFF WERE HAVING A BAD TIME AS THEY RACED TO THE RIVER WITH THE PANIC-STRICKEN JAP ARMY.



AS THE JAPS FLED TOWARDS THE RAFTS WHICH THEY FONDLY BELIEVED WOULD GIVE THEM ESCAPE, JERRY EMPTIED SEVERAL GALLONS OF PETROL INTO THE WATER AND THEN BEGAN ON THE OTHER RAFT.

NOW I'LL SLOSH PETROL ALL OVER THIS RAFT. BOY, WHAT A NIGHT!



THE PETROL FLOATED DOWN STREAM, SEEPING OMINOUSLY AMONG THE RAFTS.

THIS BATTERY GIVES A GOOD SPARK--NOW FOR IT!



RANSOME WAS READY TO IGNITE THE PETROL-SOAKED RAFT.

GET READY
TO SHOVE HER
OFF THE MOMENT
SHE FLARES UP.



WITH A TERRIFIC ROAR THE RAFT
BURST INTO FLAME, AND JERRY
AND RANSOME SET IT ON ITS
COURSE OF DESTRUCTION ...

WOW!

THERE
SHE GOES!



AS RANSOME HAD FORESEEN, THE FIERCELY BURNING RAFT WAS CARRIED SWIFTLY DOWN-RIVER TOWARDS THE MASS OF JAPANESE RAFTS, AND THE NEXT SECOND, CRIES OF ALARM RANG OUT FROM THE ENEMY SOLDIERS ON THE RIVER BANK ...



... THE RAFT OF FLAME COLLIDED WITH THE OTHER CRAFT. AT THE SAME INSTANT THE FLOATING PETROL IGNITED WITH A TERRIBLE ROAR !



ALMOST AT ONCE, THE REST OF THE PETROL LURKING AMONGST THE RAFTS BLEW UP, TOO, AND UNDER A BILLOWING CLOUD OF BLACK SMOKE, RED, SEARING FLAMES BIT THEIR WAY INTO THE WOODEN BOATS



FLUNG INTO SCREAMING CONFUSION, THE JAPS SEEMED ROBBED OF THEIR WITS, AND AS THE LEAPING FLAMES SET LIGHT TO TREES AND FOLIAGE ON THE RIVER BANK, THEY FLED INTO THE JUNGLE ...



THE PANDEMONIUM AND THE GLOW OF THE FLAMES GAVE THE WAITING PRISONERS IN THE P.O.W. CAMP ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE RIVER ALL THE SIGNAL THEY NEEDED.

FIRE.....!
CAPTAIN RANSOME'S
SIGNAL!



FEAR CREST INTO THE JAP SENTRIES AS THEY LOOKED UP AT THE FLAME-FILLED SKY, AND THEN THEY WERE FLUNG ASIDE AS, LIKE A GIANT BATTERING RAM, THE HORDE OF PRISONERS HURLED THEMSELVES THROUGH THE GATES OF THE PRISON CAMP.

LEAVE ONE
FOR ME!

SCRAG
THE
GUARDS!



WITH THE PRISON GATES FORCED ASIDE, THERE WAS NO STOPPING THE EXULTANT MEN BENT ON REVENGE FOR MONTHS OF MISERY AND HARSH TREATMENT.



BACK ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER, GENERAL TOTO AND HIS STAFF TOTTERED ON BREATHLESSLY TOWARDS THE RIVER BANK, WHERE THEY HOPED THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO GET AWAY BY RAFTS AND ESCAPE THE RAPIDLY-ADVANCING BRITISH.



RANSOME AND JERRY SURVEYED THEIR HANDIWORK WITH PRIDE. BY NOW THE WHOLE MASS OF RAFTS WERE CRACKLING FIERCELY IN THE CONSUMING BLAZE.



BACK AT THE CAMP IT WAS "TALLY-HO" WITH A VENGEANCE! IN NO TIME AT ALL THE HUNT WAS REALLY ON!

AFTER THEM!

JUMP ON THEM!

CATCH THE LITTLE VERMIN!



THE DISMAY OF THE JAPANESE HIGH COMMAND SPREAD LIKE THE FLAMES THAT NOW MET THEIR HORRIFIED EYES.



THE DESPAIRING GENERAL GAPED AT THE INFERNO BELOW KNOWING THAT ESCAPE WAS NOW IMPOSSIBLE. THEY WERE DOOMED TO DESTRUCTION BY THE PURSUING BRITISH FORCES.



THE SCORCHING WALL OF FLAME THREW BACK THE FRANTIC JAPS, WHO DESPERATELY TRIED TO REACH SOME RAFTS NOT YET DEVOURIED BY THE FIRE.



Special Force Burner

AS THEY GAZED ON THE AWESOME SCENE,
RANSOME FELT EXHILARATED YET HUMBLY
THANKFUL FOR THE SUCCESS OF HIS SCHEME.
IT SEEMED TO ATONE
SOMewhat FOR HIS
EARLIER FAILURE.



ON THE OTHER SIDE THE EX-PRISONERS WATCHED IT ALL WITH DELIRIOUS JOY. IT MEANT A JAP DEFEAT. SOON THE BRITISH WOULD COME!

NOW THE PERISHERS WILL HAVE TO TAKE WHAT'S COMING TO 'EM!



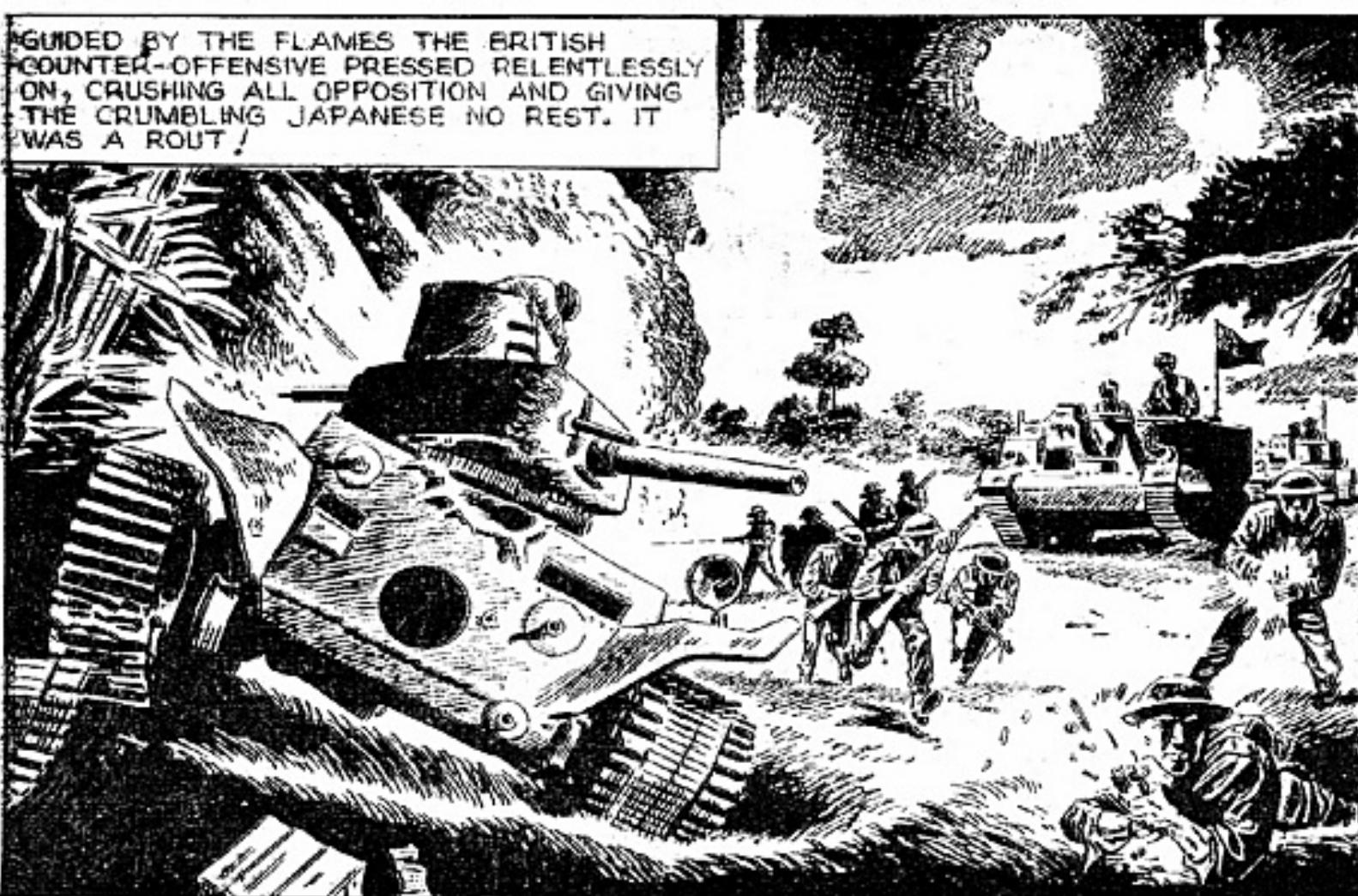
IN THEIR DELIGHT, BARNES AND FLINT FORGOT THEIR HARD FEELINGS TOWARDS THEIR LEADER AND CALLED FOR CHEERS.

I BET CAPTAIN RANSOME DID THAT--AND YOUNG JERRY!

GIVE THEM A REET GUED CHEER, LAOS!

HOORAY!

GUIDED BY THE FLAMES THE BRITISH COUNTER-OFFENSIVE PRESSED RELENTLESSLY ON, CRUSHING ALL OPPPOSITION AND GIVING THE CRUMBLING JAPANESE NO REST. IT WAS A ROUT!



THE BRITISH MORTAR FIRE DIRECTED ON TO THE JAPANESE - HELD STRIP WAS DEVASTATING .



AS A STRAY MORTAR SHELL LANDED NEAR THE RAFT. RANSOME AND JERRY DECIDED IT WAS TIME THEY MOVED . . .

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE, JERRY!

IT'S GETTING TOO HOT FOR ME, AND I DON'T MEAN JUST THE FLAMES!



SUCCESS SEEMED TO REVIVE RANSOME, AND THEY MADE GOOD PROGRESS BACK. JERRY POINTED EXCITEDLY.

LOOK! THE LADS BROKE CAMP!



Special Force Burma

AS RANSOME AND JERRY STANTON STEPPED ASHORE FROM THE RAFT, THE EXCITED AND CHEERING EX-PRISONERS, LED BY BARNES AND FLINT, SURGED FORWARD TO GREET THEM....

YOU DID IT, BY GOLLY!

OCH! BUT YE DID WELL, LADDIE!

BY THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON THE JAP DIVISION HAD SURRENDERED TO THE ADVANCING BRITISH FORCES, AND RANSOME MET UP WITH COLONEL PINDER WHOSE SPECIAL FORCE HAD PLAYED A BIG PART IN THE ACTION.

RANSOME -- IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU! I BET THAT LITTLE BLAZE WAS YOUR DOING!

ME, AND A BRAVE KID CALLED JERRY STANTON!



SUDDENLY, ROUND THE BEND IN THE RIVER CAME A NATIVE SAMPAN, AND WHO SHOULD BE IN IT, WAVING JOYFULLY, BUT CHANGI, LOOKING AS FIT AS EVER.



CHANGI SPRANG ASHORE
FOR A JOYFUL REUNION.

CHANGI! I'M
CERTAINLY GLAD
TO SEE YOU
ALIVE!

SAHIB, MY PEOPLE HID ME
WITH GREAT CUNNING. NOW
THEY REJOICE THE BRITISH
ARE VICTORIOUS!



THE NEXT MORNING THE BRITISH COMMANDER AND HIS STAFF ARRIVED AND HEARD FROM COLONEL PINDER THE STORY OF THE BLAZING RAFTS WHICH HAD CUT OFF THE RETREAT OF THE JAP DIVISION. AFTER WARMLY THANKING ROD RANSOME, THE GENERAL TURNED TO JERRY.

JERRY STANTON~~
FOR SPECIAL SERVICE
OF GREAT GALLANTRY
TO YOUR KING AND
COUNTRY, I AWARD
YOU THIS BADGE
FROM MY OWN HAT.
HOW'S THAT, EH?

I THINK HE'S
TOO OVERCOME
TO SPEAK, SIR.



A FEW DAYS LATER, THE ELATED BRITISH TROOPS BEGAN THEIR VICTORIOUS RECROSSING OF THE CHINDWIN RIVER. THEIR BITTER RETREAT HAD TURNED AT LAST TO A FRESH UPSURGE OF EFFORT AND TRIUMPH, TO RENEWED DOMINION OVER THE ENEMY AND TO ULTIMATE VICTORY IN THE BURMA CAMPAIGN.

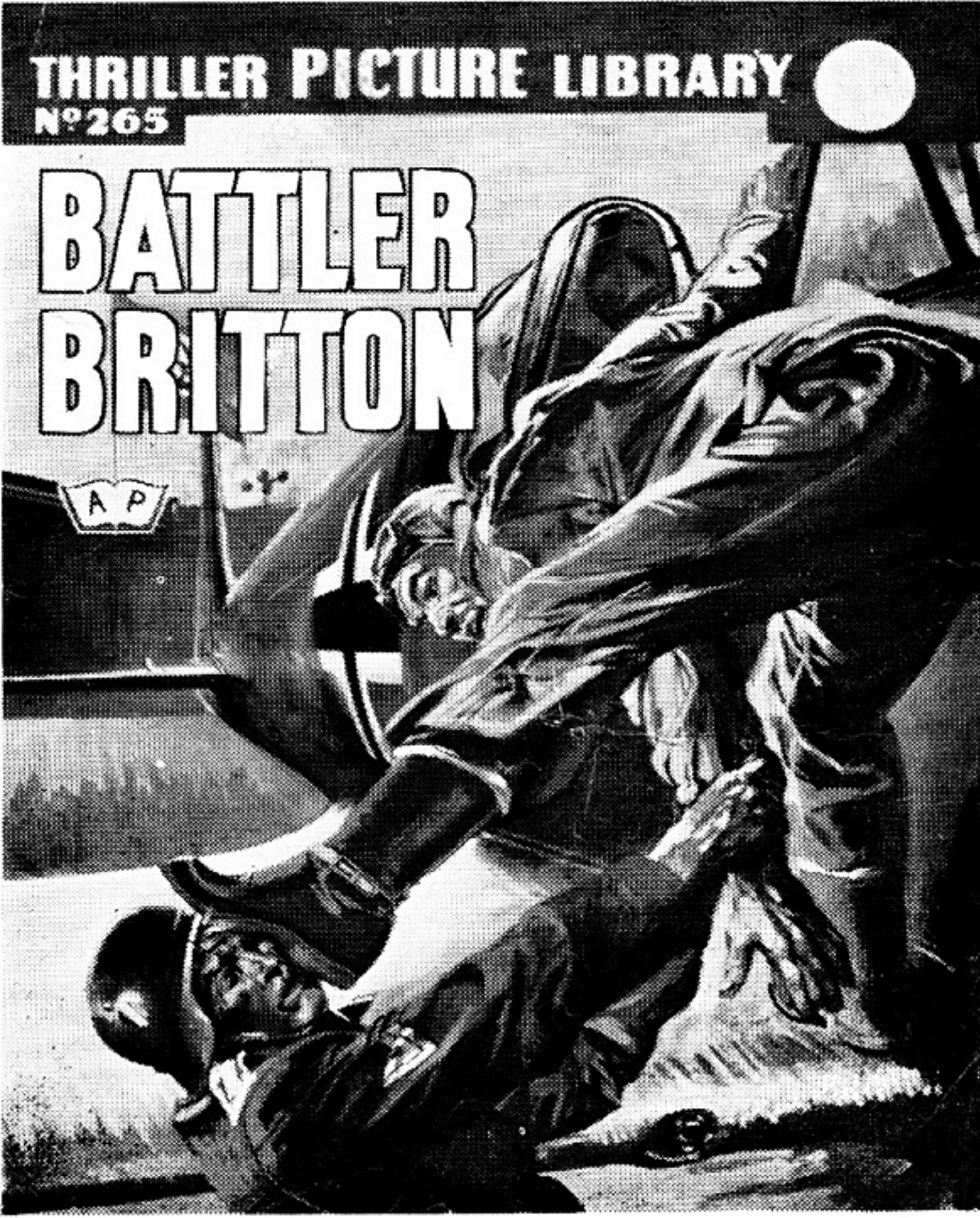
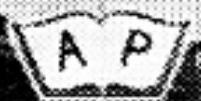


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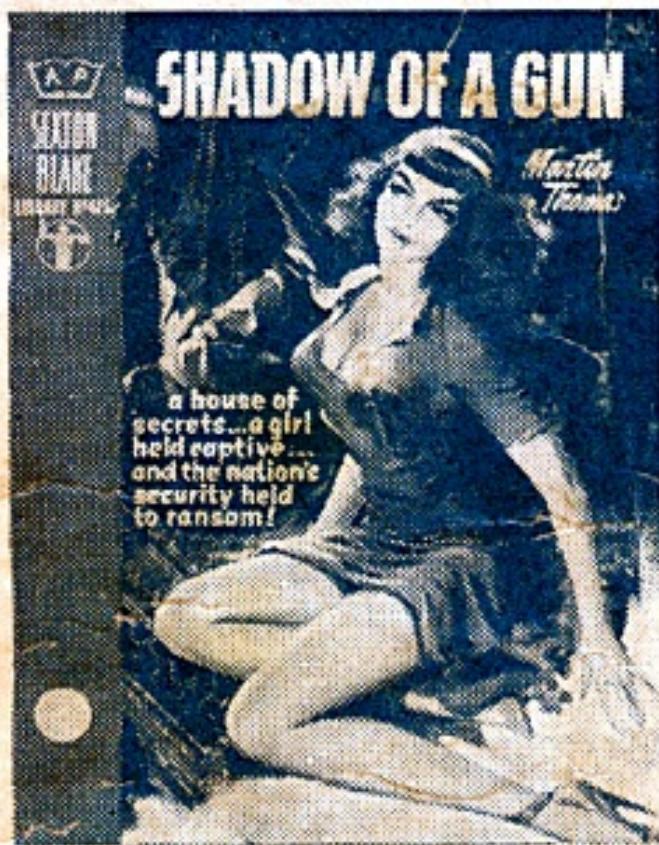
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Blake set out to find the answer—and walked into a case brim-full with trouble!

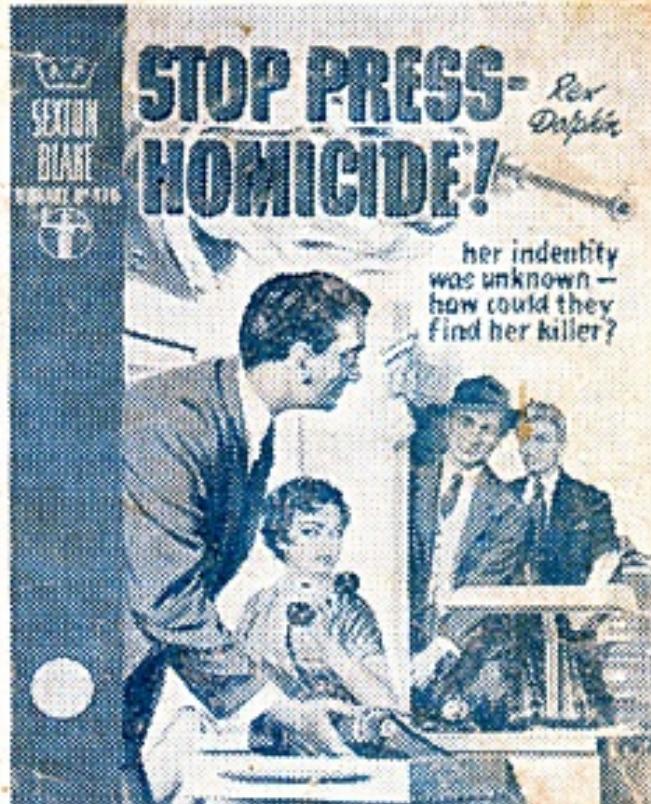
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